(c) what steps are being taken by Government to get revoked the new arrangement?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Yes.

(b) The Indonesian authorities decided in September 2003 to ensure compliance with existing guidelines for the grant of visas to ordinary passport holders for around 20 countries regarded as senstitive for immigration purposes, including India.

(c) The matter has been taken up with the Indonesian Embassy in New Delhi and with the Indonesian authorities in Jakarta, with a view to ensure that there are no difficulties for Indian nationals in obtaining viasas for Indonesia.

Reduction in U.S. Visa

† 273. SHRI RAJIV RANJAN SINGH 'LALAN':
SHRI KAPILSIBAL:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the U.S.A. have made an annual cut in issuing H-l visa from 1.95 lac to 65,000 only;

(b) if so, whether any assessment has been made regarding effects likely to be brought about on Indian Information Technology Industries as a result thereof; and

(c) if so, the assessment made in this regard and the annual number of competent Indian youth expected to get jobs in America?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes. The Amercian Competitiveness and Workforce Improvement Act of 1998 progressively increased the H1B quota for U.S. fiscal years 1999 to 2003. According to that Act, the annual quota was to revert from 195,000 in U.S. fiscal year 2003 to the original level of 65,000 from U.S. fiscal year 2004.

(b) The annual ceiling on H1B visas in the United States is one of the several factors that have a bearing on the India's information technology industry. Improved digital connectivity, technological and

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

economic competitiveness of Indian firms, continuing access to U.S. and other international markets, and growth in domestic demand, will sustaiin the rapid growth of the Indian information technology industry.

(c) Reduction in the annual quota of H1B visas will adversely affect employment opportunities for information technology professionals from all countries. The annual flow of information technology professionals to the United States also depends on a number of other market-related factors, including the trends in the U.S. information technology market.

Immigration Racket

274. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the British Home Office has taken up with the Indian High Commission in UK, the issue of illegal immigration racket involving Indian High Commission officials;

(b) if so, whether an Attache of Indian High Commission in London was recalled at the behest of British Home Office;

(c) whether it is a fact that the British Home Office has charged that some officials of MEA, New Delhi are involved in this recket; and

(d) if so, the facts thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) The U.K. authorities had provided information to the Government of India on the possible involvement of some officials in one of our Consulates in the U.K.

(b) No.

(c) No.

(d) The information provided by U.K. authorities has been handed over to CBI to conduct an investigation into the matter.